



# M E D I A   R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH &  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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## May is Mental Health Month

**Nashville--** In recognition of Mental Health Month, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities is encouraging Tennesseans to increase their awareness of mental health and mental illness by understanding the fundamental nature of mental health to overall health as well as the destructive nature of stigma in our society.

"One in every four Tennesseans will have a diagnosable mental disorder this year," said TDMHDD Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts. "Mental illnesses are real illnesses for which there are treatments and solutions. Mental illnesses are just as diagnosable and just as successfully treatable as other physical illnesses."

Mental health is the successful performance of mental functions resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with others, and the ability to adapt to change and to successfully cope with adversity. Mental health is essential to overall health and indispensable to lifelong personal well being.

On the other hand, mental illness is defined as a health condition that is characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior, is mediated by the brain, and is associated with impaired functioning/ways of talking, feeling, and acting that society considers "abnormal." Mental disorders frequently co-exist with other medical disorders. Yet, many individuals living with a mental disorder do not seek care because of the stigma surrounding mental illness. Stigma is the single greatest barrier to people getting the treatment they need.

"The greatest weapon against stigma is knowledge and interpersonal acceptance of mental illnesses as real and mental health treatment as effective," said Betts. "We hope with the activities and information available this month, people will learn more about mental health and mental illness. We must enhance community understanding and empower those who might be at high risk to seek help."

Kicking off the Mental Health Month will be the Art for Awareness reception at Legislative Plaza in Nashville that honors consumer artists from throughout the state followed by "Children's Mental Health Week" May 4 - May 10. For a complete listing of Mental Health Month activities please visit [www.state.tn.us/mental](http://www.state.tn.us/mental) or call TDMHDD's Office of Communications at (615) 253-4812.

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